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JUNTOS, MIGRANT JUSTICE RALLY IN SOLIDARITY WITH MIGRANT WORKERS

COURTESY OF NANCY RIVERA

Demonstrators gathered at the Hannaford supermarket in Middlebury for a protest asking the chain to sign on to Migrant Justice's "Milk with Dignity" campaign.

By TIFFANY LI
Staff Writer

Students and community members gathered on Friday, April 21 outside the Hannaford supermarket at 260 Court St. in Middlebury to protest unfair treatment of migrant farm workers by the supermarket chain. The protesters chanted slogans in both Spanish and English, demanding that Hannaford acknowledge the alleged substandard living and working conditions of the migrant farm workers who supply its dairy products.

The protest was a part of advocacy organization Migrant Justice's "Milk With Dignity" campaign and was organized in collaboration with Juntos, the college's student-migrant solidarity network. This April the "Organizing Tour" has visited colleges and organizations across the seven northeastern states that have Hannaford stores.

Out of the approximately 21,000 farm workers in Vermont, Migrant Justice estimates that around 1,500 are migrants who face discrimination and are excluded from legal worker and housing rights protections that are afforded to other farm workers.

"The Milk with Dignity campaign builds a movement of farmworkers and allies calling on dairy companies to ensure respect for human rights in their supply chains," Migrant Justice's website reads.

After signing the first ever Milk With Dignity Agreement in 2017 with Ben and Jerry's, bringing 72 farms that supply the multinational ice cream company into the Milk With Dignity Program, Migrant Justice shifted its campaign focus towards advocating for the Hannaford supermarket chain to join the program.

Prior to the protest, Migrant Justice field organizers Thelma Gomez and Abel Luna gave a presentation about Milk With

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Middlebury School in China to reopen for first time since 2020

By HANWEN ZHANG
Contributing Writer

The Middlebury School in China is scheduled to reopen for the fall 2023 semester after being suspended for three years due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

For the first time since the school's sudden closure in spring 2020, six students from Middlebury and other institutions were admitted to study in Beijing for the upcoming fall semester. Study abroad at Kunming, the school's other location, will not be offered for the fall semester because of the small number of applicants, according to Kai Zhang, Chinese Department lecturer and director of Middlebury's School in China.

For Chinese learners, the program is an opportunity to apply their knowledge in an immersive context. Amuna Sonomdagva '24.5, one of the six admitted students for the fall 2023 semester, believes that going abroad to China makes the best use of the efforts she made to learn Chinese over the past two years.

"It makes what I have learned in textbooks more natural and authentic. It will be a challenge and a fun experience," Sonomdagva said. As an International Politics and Economics (IPE) major, Sonomdagva is drawn to the courses in political science and economics offered in Beijing. She also looks forward to exploring the city and its food culture.

The program's reopening will not be the exact same experience as three years ago. Students are unlikely to live with a Chinese roommate this fall, which was an important feature of the experience before the pandemic.

"Our partner university changed its housing policy during the pandemic, and it takes time for the policy to revert to normal,"

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COURTESY OF KAI ZHANG

Six students have been admitted to attend the Middlebury School Abroad in Beijing next fall.

Abed Abbas '24 wins SGA presidential election

By JONATHAN EATON
Staff Writer

The student body voted on Monday, April 24 to elect Abed Abbas '24 as president of the Student Government Association (SGA), with Fanta Diop '25 & Tara Masri '25 joining as his vice presidents. Approximately 44% of students eligible to vote, or 1,111 of 2,520 students, voted in the presidential election. This marks a substantial increase from last year's election, where only 775 students participated in voting. Abbas received 773 votes and Aniketan Pelletier '25, the other candidate, received 338 votes.

Abbas is a first-generation college student and a Palestinian refugee from Lebanon. He ran on a platform of enhancing the dining experience on campus, improving the access to financial support and reviving student life in McCullough Student Center.

One of Abbas's first goals is to address late-night dining options if they are not back to their regular schedules by next fall. "This applies to the Grille, 10 o'clock Ross, and other alternatives to ensure we have sufficient options if things go wrong,"Abbas explained. Abbas also plans to work with Pelletier to develop a plan for financial transparency.

In addition to the SGA presidential election, first years voted on their SGA senators to represent them next year, electing

COURTESY PHOTO

Abed Abbas '24 (center) was elected to serve as Student Government Association President beginning next fall, alongside Vice Presidents Fanta Diop '25 (left) and Tara Masri '25 (right).

YiJun Kim '26 and Bryan Harris '26. Of the first-year class, 51.63% voted in the election. This year had a 31.22% increase in turnout from last year's first-year election.

Harris is from Los Angeles, Calif. and ran on a platform to increase student access to resources and opportunities, improve the physical and mental health of students on campus, and promote diversity, equity and inclusion. He was elected with 179 votes. This summer, to prepare for being a senator next year, Bryan plans to study the details of different support systems at Middlebury in order to better inform the student body about the resources available to them. He also hopes to learn effective strategies to translate student concerns into real change by talking to past SGA senators and studying recent SGA history.

Kim is from Nevada and was elected with 193 votes. Her platform was focused on improving the access to transportation for those who do not have access to vehicles on campus and to increase SGA transparency and advocacy. One of Kim's first priorities in the fall will be to choose her sophomore committee members.

"I'm excited to create a group of students who will work closely together to establish a sense of community for sophomores at Midd," Kim said.

Afra Fairooz '24 ran unopposed and will serve as a Junior Senator next year. Fairooz ran on a campaign platform of increasing the availability of the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) office and its resources for international students and to increase networking opportunities in the fields of finance and consulting for women, people of color, international students and queer people. Once in office, one of Fairooz's first priorities will be to "start working on a bill to extend the supply of menstrual products in all residential halls and also to create a process for students (who need it) to apply for assistance with menstrual healthcare."

A special election will be held at the beginning of next year to fill the second Junior Senator vacancy.

The presidential candidates participated in a live debate in Crossroads Cafe on the night before the election, which drew a sizable crowd.

"All candidates know the complexity of the issues we face on campus and they understand that they require deeper understanding and require much more complicated solutions than the ones we usually come up with. I think their experiences will motivate them to tackle the issues we are going through," Yahya Rahhawi '26 said.

"I was supporting AK [Aniketan Pelletier], and I was pretty upset he didn't win actually, but I think Abed will be a good candidate. I hope for the best for our student government." Ben Greer '25 said. "We really need the Grille back."

"Personally, I voted for AK. However, in all the conversations I have heard they are both great candidates and this year more than others, it felt like we would be okay either way," James Flaumenhaft '24 said.

Fall 2023 the middlebury will be transformed by the energy of the new elected leaders fighting for more food, transparency, and greater access to resources on campus. In the meantime the current SGA representatives will remain in office till the end of the semester. Applications for SGA committee directors will open at the end of the semester, and all students are encouraged to apply.

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By DORIAN LAMB

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Thor Sawin named new associate dean of Middlebury Language Schools for curriculum

By RYAN McELROY
News Editor

Thor Sawin, associate professor at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies (MIIS) in Monterey, was named the new associate dean of curriculum of Middlebury Language Schools on April 20. Having taught German, English and linguistics at MIIS since 2013, he looks forward to strengthening the college's reputation as a center for language instruction through new, collaborative initiatives at the college and beyond.

"One of the reasons I love Middlebury and was excited to take the job even out here is I don't think there's any other organization in the world that has as many different kinds of language learning happening under the same umbrella as we have," Sawin told The Campus.

He taught in the summer language schools for four summers since 2018, including during the pandemic and most recently last summer in 2022. Sawin's connection to Middlebury's Vermont campus extends back to 2017, when he presented to the college on language instruction at liberal arts colleges. He has also taught two J-Term courses — Beginning German Continued, and another on linguistics — through which he gained valuable experience with students and faculty in Vermont. He hopes to use his wide range of experiences at Middlebury to improve language instruction throughout all of Middlebury's programs.

Sawin described some of the projects that he will be contributing to in this new role, such as streamlining the process of language teacher certification in Vermont and working across the country at large to advocate for language learning through programs such as Advocacy Days in Washington, D.C. Additionally, he will be looking to expand the research on language instruction that occurs in Middlebury and publicizing the different kinds of learning he and other professors have witnessed in their classrooms.

Courtesy photo

Thor Sawin is an associate professor at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies (MIIS) at Monterey.

"I'm working with some of the major language organizations in the country — language teaching organizations and advocacy organizations — to train researchers, to train language teachers, just to raise the profile of language learning all across Middlebury," Sawin explained.

He expressed his excitement about collaborating with other initiatives at Middlebury that he sees as essential to language instruction. Sawin specifically spoke about collaborating more with the Language Schools' graduate and doctoral students to strengthen their educational opportunities. He also anticipates working with Middlebury's Conflict Transformation Graduate Fellows on advancing their goal of using language in their chosen field.

"Language learning is so connected to the strengths of Middlebury, and global security threats, climate change mitigation and policy — all of this work is interlinguistic work," he explained. "It's a cliché thing to say, but without language skills, none of this work can actually happen."

Sawin also discussed his thoughts on the possibility of new methods for language instruction at Middlebury, such as exploring how artificial intelligence tools could be implemented in the classroom. He believes that artificial intelligence will be a powerful tool to help students assess their learning and enable instructors to concentrate on the most important parts of instruction.

"I'm really excited about helping us think through what's happening with artificial intelligence, with artificially intelligently generated texts. I believe there'll be as great of a need for language skills as ever — but the language skills are changing, the kinds of tasks that will happen in our classrooms are changing," Sawin said.

He looks forward to learning more about each of the 13 language schools and understanding their different initiatives as well as the commonalities across various disciplines. He hopes to share more of the language schools' work with the rest of Middlebury and the language instruction community worldwide.

"It would be great if we could publish a journal issue that highlighted the strengths of each of the different schools. Like what's constant about this sort of Middlebury language schools model, and then all of the ways that each school is facing different geopolitical pressures, different interest in enrollments and then the pedagogical innovations that each school is doing," Sawin added.

Sawin looks forward to working on Middlebury's new initiatives and, overall, strengthening language learning across the institution.

"Language learning is always worth it. It's always humbling, it always costs us our ego, our time, our energy. But in the end, it's always such a practical skill," Sawin said. "So I think I want to help make the case that language learning is still a highly practical skill for the 21st century."

He also expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to contribute to the development of Middlebury Language Schools and enhance its language instruction in the coming years.

"It's a huge honor to be part of not just a traditional language school, but a school that's embedded in an institution that has so many strengths and such a heart to really change the world, and such a long track record of doing that," Sawin explained. "That's what made this position really exciting to me."

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Zhang said.

Students also feel uncertain about being the first cohort to study abroad in China since 2020.

"Many students going abroad last year and this year changed their destinations because they or their families are concerned about China's handling of public health emergencies," Sonomdagva said. This impacts students like her who plan to go to Beijing, too. She could not learn about the experience and how to prepare from a previous attendee because the program could not find previous attendees who are still current students.

Despite these difficulties, Sonomdagva said that support from faculty made her feel more at ease about studying in China.

"Taking Chinese was one of the best decisions I've made at Midd, because the department really cares about its students," she said.

The program's organizers are also optimistic.

"News coverage of China can make students insecure about studying abroad there," Zhang said. "But I hope students still have the courage to go to China and experience the reality of the country by themselves. That may challenge some false beliefs and make their time abroad very worthwhile."

JUNTOS, MIGRANT JUSTICE RALLY IN SOLIDARITY WITH MIGRANT WORKERS

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Dignity in Twilight Hall. Gomez spoke in Spanish and Luna spoke in English.

They spoke on the conditions many migrant workers face on farms. "A normal work week for workers is between 60 to 80 hours per week," Luna said. "A lot of [workers] don't have a day off, a lot of people are working below the state's minimum wage, and a lot of the housing that is provided is inadequate for humans to live in."

Gomez shared her personal experience of her first paycheck being withheld by her employer. "They told me that basically I was going to be paying rent and not getting any money," Luna translated as Gomez spoke. The presentation also included a migrant worker's video testimony about an injury he says he suffered after Hannaford's complaint line failed to address unsafe equipment.

Gomez and Luna then introduced the Milk With Dignity program as an enforceable, viable solution that could improve migrant farm workers' conditions in a short time span. The program introduces a code of conduct that participating corporations would require all its supplier farms to follow. A third-party monitoring body, called the Milk With Dignity Standards Council, enforces adherence to the code.

In response to audience members' questions about why the campaign targeted corporations rather than state law, Luna cited the Vermont Department of Labor's slow response times.

"The state of Vermont has limited capacity when it comes to enforcement," Luna said. "We needed a mechanism that was going to have immediate results."

Gomez and Luna also emphasized that Migrant Justice understands how struggling dairy farms face economic incentives to lower their employees' working and living standards. "Our fight is not with the farm. Our fight is with the big corporations," Luna said. Under the Milk With Dignity program, corporations would pay a premium to supplier farms and farm workers complying with the Code of Conduct's standards.

Audience members shared previous experiences protesting.

TRAGEDY → ORGANIZING → ACTION
TRAGEDIA → ORGANIZACIÓN → ACCIÓN
DIGNITY TOUR
@Migrant Justice VT
ANNAFORD JOIN #MILK WITH DIGNITY!
MILK DIGNITY
FARMWORKERS AND CUSTOMERS DEMAND MILK WITH DIGNITY
Milk w/ Dignity

Tiffany Li/The Middlebury Campus

The demonstration began with a gathering in the Twilight Hall auditorium, where Migrant Justice field organizers addressed students and other participants.

Oliver Buzzard '22.5 learned about and started working with Migrant Justice in the summer of 2022. "I did a little bit of tabling at this Hannaford [in Middlebury] and went to a summer protest in Williston," Buzzard said.

Around 20 members of the assembled audience in Twilight joined the demonstration on Friday outside of Hannaford. The demonstration began in the store, and later the protestors moved outside to the parking lot after they were escorted out by the store's Assistant Manager Jonathon Edwards.

The demonstrators, who included a group of migrant workers, spoke to Edwards about the Milk With Dignity campaign and the abuses that migrant workers suffered in farms that supplied dairy to Hannaford. The demonstrators requested that Edwards relay this information to the CEO of Hannaford, Michael Vail. Edwards maintained a polite tone with the protestors, but refused to take any informational materials on the program. When asked for his thoughts on the protest, he replied that he personally could not give any comments. Edwards then returned to the store.

Protesters chanted slogans demanding that Hannaford join the Milk With Dignity program. As cars passed by, they occasionally honked in support, spurring cheers from the protestors.

Many of the people who attended the protest were members of Juntos. Laura Rivera '23, one of the protesters, began as a tutor with the student organization in her first year and became vice president this year.

Nancy Rivera '26 also joined Juntos in the fall of 2022. "I worked with undocumented migrants through a program to help them get to college, so it's something that I've always liked to do. I wanted to come to college and still continue in some respect," Nancy Rivera said. "So when I found Juntos, I was like, 'Oh, this is for me'."

Before the pandemic, Juntos's community outreach branch was more deeply involved with the Milk With Dignity campaign, but that collaboration stalled during the pandemic.

"It sort of slipped the consciousness of Juntos," said President of Juntos Damaris Neaves '24. "It was brought back to life by a group of seniors [last year]. They really wanted to support Migrant Justice and Milk With Dignity coming back on campus and turned to Juntos. It was really a collaborative process between that student collective and Juntos."

Lili Platt '25 is an active part of this collective. "I've been working with Migrant Justice for the past few years and organizing with the student collective that's been doing Milk With Dignity and outreach with Migrant Justice," they said. "It's a tangible version of unity and collaboration."

Platt commented on the protest's connection to a larger movement. "I also think of the generations and generations of so many people who've resisted labor abuse — it's very invigorating," they said.

In addition to facilitating the Milk With Dignity event, Juntos is also planning a community soccer event with migrant workers involved in its English tutoring program, as well as a catered dinner to be held in Atwater in May with Doña Alejandra, a migrant chef and business owner that Juntos helped to register as a caterer for the college. Juntos is also working with Middlebury Distinguished Men of Color to organize the group's annual spring block party.

"We're in the space of wrapping up [for the semester]," Neaves said. She also hopes to recruit more people to join Juntos next year and be in leadership positions.

"It is a lot of work, but [Juntos] has grown into something unique and necessary for the community," Neaves said.

STAYING ROOTED: A GUIDE TO MIDDLEBURY WILDFLOWER IDENTIFICATION

By DORIAN LAMB
Photojournalist

These past few weeks have been especially stressful at Middlebury, from false alarms and reduced dining options to upcoming final exams. One of the many outlets that has helped me maintain peace during these times has been grounding myself in the natural world, looking above these difficulties and down to the Earth itself. One of the reasons I came to Middlebury was because of Vermont's impressive nature, and according to the Vermont Center for Geographic Information, the land around Middlebury's campus is even considered a unique biodiversity hotspot.

Accessing this ecologically rich environment may be daunting for those who are new to this region, like me, but starting slowly with easily identifiable flora is a manageable way to familiarize oneself with the surrounding nature. In that spirit, this brief photo tour aims to help readers recognize three different wildflowers that are blooming in this area right now, as well as introduce iNaturalist, an app that can make learning about the variety of flora and fauna more accessible.

Trout Lilies

Along the portion of the Trail Around Middlebury (TAM) that runs between South Street and the golf course, the forest floor is blanketed in yellow dots. These flowers, named yellow trout lilies (Erythronium americanum) for their leaves' mottled colors — which resemble a brook trout according to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center — are distinguished in their ability to form massive colonies under the right conditions. With only one flower and a couple leaves per individual plant, these massive swaths of life burgeoning under the just-budding trees are difficult to comprehend the scope of — especially if once you learn that it can take several years for one of these colonies to even start producing flowers.

Yellow trout lilies can be easily identified by their tall, solitary flowers, which consist of three petals and three petal-like sepals. When the plant is not in bloom, it presents as only a single leaf sprouting from the ground, with the immature leaves having the same mottled brown-and-green appearance as mature leaves. These blossoms only last a few weeks, after which the flowers will wither and be replaced by bulbous, green seed pods.

Hepatica

These small plants are some of the first to bloom when springtime arrives, with flowers that open before their leaves can even finish unfurling. The sharp-lobed hepatica (Hepatica nodilis acuta) comes in a variety of different colors, with blossoms ranging from white to pink to purple and spotty leaves cycling through green, red, and brown throughout the seasons. This flower is recognizable, though, by the collection of lime green carpals at its center, and the many small, white stamens that encompass them. As suggested by its name, the sharp-lobed hepatica has a round-lobed counterpart, both of which are native to Vermont; according to the digital database Minnesota Wildflowers, the former is recognized by the sharp tips of its leaves, whereas the latter's leaves have a more curved edge.

Springbeauties

The Carolina springbeauty (Claytonia caroliniana), despite its name, is found most commonly in New England — although its wide range spans most of the eastern United States. The small flowers are always five-petaled and pale pink, with darker veins creating visually distinct stripes. Their early spring emergence is related to the amount of light they can access from their place in the ground: Once the tree canopy fills with new leaves, the flowers will retreat.

Vermont is home to another, similar variety of the springbeauty flower too, named the Virginia springbeauty. While the blossoms of this variety and the Carolina springbeauty visually appear similar, the Minnesota Wildflowers database advises that the two species can be differentiated by noting the shape of their leaves. Carolina springbeauties have broader leaves, usually two per stem, while Virginia springbeauties' leaves are longer, narrower, and appear visually comparable to blades of grass.

iNaturalist

Needless to say, there are far more than just three species of wildflower that the Vermont wilderness has to offer. For instances in which identification is proving difficult — or because you want to compare your thoughts with someone else's sighting — the iNaturalist app could prove to be a useful tool. For my own purposes, iNaturalist reinforced my confidence in the IDs I'd made of the aforementioned wildflowers, as well as serves as a digital collection of the fauna I've encountered throughout my stay at Midd thus far.

iNaturalist, an initiative now run by the California Academy of Sciences and National Geographic, allows users to crowdsource plant and animal identification data based on location and then share this data with users and researchers. Using the app is as easy as uploading a photo and seeing what the iNaturalist interface suggests as a possible species ID. Suggestions are based upon a visual analysis of the uploaded photo, other observations that have been made nearby, and preexisting identifications of species known to live in the area. Once an observation has been uploaded, it can be re-confirmed by other members of the iNaturalist community; this confirmation of a correct identification can upgrade an identification from "Casual Grade" to "Research Grade."

It is also possible to upload observations under the "Unknown" category, after which other users of the app can suggest possible identifications. Therein lies the beauty of iNaturalist: Even if you don't know the species yourself, the app may give you access to someone who does.

Getting grounded in the natural world and familiarizing yourself with local flora doesn't have to be daunting. Just connecting oneself with the beauty of one's surroundings is among the simplest ways to celebrate the bright things the world has to offer.

A view of the Trail Around Middlebury (TAM) as life seeps back in.

A collection of yellow trout lilies amongst sparse duff.

A collection of yellow trout lilies that have found a home between tree roots.

A sharp-lobed hepatica plant with white flowers and unfurling leaves.

Carolina springbeauties sprouting between immature yellow trout lily leaves.

Photos by Dorian Lamb

Little Free Libraries bring reading, community bonding to Middlebury

By CHARLIE FISCH
Staff Writer

Fueled by a love of books, Middlebury resident Amy Graham installed a small box on a post outside of her home in summer 2018. Behind the hinged door is a rotating selection of books, all of which are available for the community to borrow for free.

The box on Graham's residential cul-de-sac is one of Middlebury's five Little Free Libraries — book collection boxes where community members can take or leave books for free. The boxes are typically maintained by the person who installs them, and those in Middlebury are located in a mixture of residential and commercial areas. The registered libraries closest to the College sit on 8 South St. at the Fletcher House and outside the Middlebury Eye Associates on Main St.

Little Free Library is an international nonprofit organization based in St. Paul, Minn., dedicated to promoting literacy, increasing book access and fostering tightly-knit communities, according to its website. The organization has over 150,000 collection boxes in 120 countries — including five Little Free Libraries registered in Middlebury. The town of Middlebury also features some unregistered community-sharing boxes, such as the museum and art box outside of the Sheldon Museum.

Graham said that installing her library felt like an extension of the work she does for her day job. She runs a children's literacy foundation in her mother's memory called Bonnie's Book Foundation, which provides books nationwide to children who may not have access to them on their own.

Graham's partner built the physical library container, and Graham works to maintain the library and keep it well-stocked. While Graham had known about the nonprofit for some time, she said it wasn't until she moved to Middlebury that she lived in an area suitable for a sustainable Little Free Library.

Graham said she considers her Little Free Library a success in the Middlebury community. "It's heavily used. There are people who will drive up to our cul-de-sac just to park and go to the Little Free Library. I see people looking at it all the time, I see kids on their way home from school stop and pick out a book as they walk home," Graham said.

The library is popular enough that it has become self-sustaining, she added. Graham rarely needs to restock it to maintain the book supply, although she occasionally changes out books to diversify the content. People in the community appreciate the library, and Graham said it has been a fun project for her household.

"I think they're fun, and I think they create a community spirit of people sharing books and making books more readily available to people in their neighborhoods," Graham said.

She added that the joy that the library brings, particularly to children when they discover books that they love, is one of the best parts of the library. The community-driven nature of the Little Free Library, where everyone contributes, makes it a vital source of town bonding.

The Little Free Library organization aims to have a library in every community and believes in a book's ability to recognize and empower every individual. On its website, Little Free Library states that over 30 million adults in the U.S. cannot read past the third-grade level, and two-thirds of children living in poverty do not have access to books.

The Little Free Libraries in Middlebury have benefited the community beyond their purpose as book collection boxes in recent years. Some libraries were also converted into food pantries during the Covid-19 pandemic, according to Graham, to make shelf-stable food available to families in need. Meanwhile, Graham's library has become a staple in many childrens' walks home from school and family outings.

While the Ilsley Public Library in Middlebury is not affiliated with Little Free Libraries, Ilsley Director Dana Hart expressed her enthusiasm and support for the nonprofit's programs.

"These libraries build community, support literacy, and are just plain fun. It is always uplifting to see one," Hart wrote in an email to The Campus.

Ilsley Public Library has a "free table" outside of the building stocked by The Friends of Ilsley Library as well as monthly used book sales where books are sold at discounted prices. Hart suggested that both options could be an excellent way to stock Middlebury's Little Free Libraries and give the community easy access to reading materials.

MAGGIE REYNOLDS/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Little Free Library outside of Middlebury Eye Associates in downtown.

Student-run on-campus bar supplements limited local nightlife options

By MANDY BERGHELA
SGA Correspondant

For the first time in several years, Middlebury students gathered at an on-campus, student-run bar on Thursday, April 13 on the first floor of the Mahaney Arts Center.

The bar, named The Catamount, was created by Shane Silverman '24.5 and Marc Chu '24, who felt the social scene at Middlebury was lacking. While students often head into town on Thursday nights for "bar night" in the basement of Two Brothers Tavern, they often face long lines at the door. Two Brothers has limited space — and there are no other bars open after 9 p.m. that are within walking distance of campus.

"We wanted to create a casual, affordable drinking environment for older students to enjoy, and I think we've most definitely met our goal," Silverman told The Campus. Silverman noted that a number of people have been involved in the process of creating the bar, including college staff in dining services and events management. "Providing students with this experience has definitely been a team effort," Silverman said.

Dan Detora, executive director of food service operations, has supported Silverman along the way. Dining Services saw the student-run bar as a good idea in part because the bar options in town are not able to hold much of the student population, Detora told The Campus.

"The first night went well. We had 105 customers," Detora said. "The town of Middlebury is obviously very limited, and the spaces they do have cannot carry the entire student population, but Dining Services are here to support. Shane [Silverman] came to us with the idea, and as long as the idea is viable and students behave, we did agree that this was a need."

Cameron Truman-Wyss '23.5, a student who has attended "bar night" at Two Brothers, agreed.

"I think that the local drinking scene at Middlebury differs significantly from other, larger schools," Truman-Wyss said. "The drinking scene at Midd revolves around local taverns and breweries.

Truman-Wyss said that due to the local beer and brewery scene in Vermont, participating in the bar scene around Middlebury can sometimes be intimidating for those with little experience with craft brewing.

"That isn't to say that the scene lacks social spots in town, but it just requires a certain person to appreciate the spots," he said.

One question being posed by students is what effect the on-campus student-run bar will have on bars in town.

Two Brothers Tavern, perhaps the most well-known and conveniently located bar for Middlebury students, is the prime spot for students over the age of 21 to socialize on Thursday nights.

Some students also go to the longstanding institution Mister Up's, which is known for its daily specials, like reduced price cocktails or pints.

Holmes Jacobs, along with his wife Megan Brady, brother Beal Jacobs and father Travis Jacobs (a former history professor at the college) are the owners of Two Brothers Tavern.

"We started Two Brothers Tavern in 2002, as we all wanted to return home to our families and start a business that could help give back to the community," Holmes Jacobs told The Campus.

For more than 20 years, since the Jacobses bought the restaurant, Middlebury students have enthusiastically been going to Tuesday and Thursday bar nights at Two Brothers Tavern. Now, bar nights are only on Thursdays and often draw a large crowd of students from the college community.

"We consider ourselves stewards of this tradition in which the college students come down to both our Tavern space and sister restaurant below, Notte," Holmes Jacobs said. "We hire a DJ in Notte for a night of dancing and revelry."

Holmes Jacobs added that nearly 200 to 250 students may try to go to Two Brothers on a given Thursday night, but they have to limit the capacity to 99 people. Lines to get in often run down Park Street, which is not ideal for students looking to unwind.

MAGGIE REYNOLDS/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Two Brothers Tavern, located on Main Street, is the main bar option for students in town.

"The energy at bar night requires a very particular state of mind, a state of mind that is mitigated by the long wait at entry," Truman-Wyss said. "There is always a line that moves at a snail's pace and ruins the energy of the space before even entering it. However, this is certainly due to the fact that Two Brothers is the only really accessible bar to Middlebury students that is open late. This means that any Middlebury student that wants a fun bar experience flocks to Two Brothers."

Silverman is aware of the effects the new Catamount Bar may have on the bar scene in town, specifically Two Brothers Tavern, but sees it as a way to offer students another option for a night out.

"This may mean that fewer students go out to town, but I don't know if that will be bad for Two Brothers or anywhere else," Silverman said. "Our bar may reduce crowds and make the scene more manageable. Overall, we are not trying to put anyone out of business, we just wanted to see something new, so we created it; local businesses might even like to see drinking more contained to the campus."

When asked about the new student-run bar, Holmes Jacobs said Two Brothers Tavern will always welcome new businesses to the community and wishes The Catamount the best of luck.

"Invariably, the addition of any new competition can have an adverse effect on sales, especially one that is underwritten by an institution with many more financial resources than the rest of the community-run businesses," Holmes Jacobs said. "But our focus needs to always be on doing the very best we can to set up our business for success. At the end of the day, the more successful businesses we have, the more vibrant our community will be!"

The Catamount Bar will be having its second and final night of the semester on Thursday, April 27 but will hopefully be continuing into the fall 2023 semester.

"On Thursdays, students are a little less rowdy, so the night works very well," Silverman said. "In the future, I do hope to continue opening on Thursday nights, but at the same time, we are starting to figure out a way to open on Fridays and Saturdays too. Next semester, if things go well, we will be open two or three times a month on either Thursday, Friday or Saturday."

PREPARING TO OPEN FOR THE SEASON, SHELDON MUSEUM MAKES CHANGES TO LEADERSHIP

By MARTIN CHEN
Journalism Fellow

The Sheldon Museum, the oldest community-based museum in the nation, is experimenting with a new leadership structure by choosing to not fill the role of Executive Director. The community has been waiting for the response of the museum's board since former Executive Director Stephanie Skenyon resigned abruptly in late January.

"We are now advertising for two essential job positions, Business Operations Manager and Visitor Services Coordinator," said Collections Manager Allison LaCroix. "In the future we intend to add Museum Educator and Development/Fundraising positions. We intend for this distributed leadership model to employ a culture of equity where individuals are self-managed and empowered, responsible and encouraged to fulfill their potential within their roles."

Associate Director Mary Manley is also leaving the museum after 25 years in order to spend more time with her grandchild. "Her functions will be performed by the new business manager and visitors' services coordinator," LaCroix said.

The museum's administrative structure will change from a top-down management system to a more democratic one, which will also reduce overall payroll costs for the museum.

According to LaCroix, they are now holding bi-weekly staff and board meetings to help everyone adjust during the restructuring process. "The Executive Committee will serve as the liaison between the staff and board of trustees and help with any outstanding issues until all job positions are filled," LaCroix said.

In addition to the administrative adjustment, the museum has been working on several large infrastructure projects. These include the construction of a more energy-efficient heating system and a multi-year window restoration project, which includes 28 newly-restored windows to replace those destroyed in a storm last December, according to reporting from The Addison Independent.

The museum will reopen for the season on May 13 with many new exhibitions. In addition to these infrastructure improvements, the museum will also be restarting its educational programs with local schools.

The museum will feature six exhibitions this year, according to LaCroix. From May 13 to Aug. 26, last year's collage exhibit, "Artists in the Archives," will continue to be on display in the Pierce Gallery. The exhibit will be expanded to highlight those historically marginalized in Vermont and absent from the state's archival records. Three digital collages will be replaced with the artists' original analog artworks. Displays of recently discovered and acquired materials on the presence of Native American, African American and Asian residents in Middlebury will also accompany the collages.

From Sept. 8 to Jan. 2024, the exhibit "Selling Fashion in Historical Middlebury, 1800s-early 1900," will explore how Middlebury and Addison County residents dressed and groomed themselves during the 19th to early 20th centuries, offering a historical overview of local clothing and tailoring businesses, barber and beauty salons, and jewelers and accessory stores that existed in historic Middlebury. The exhibit includes items such as photographs, prints, newspaper advertisements, fashion catalogs and magazines and other collectibles that illustrate how both high and low standards of beauty were advertised and consumed locally.

From May to October, the exhibition series "Found in Collections: A Closer Look" will run in Cerf Gallery. The exhibit is devoted to making more of Sheldon's collection available to the public, including many items that have not been on display for decades. The exhibit invites questions about which pieces are in the museum collections and why they were collected, LaCroix explained. The first installation in this exhibition, "Variety Sew: A Sampling of Textile Tools and Devices" will trace technological developments in early textile production by displaying a variety of sewing machines, spinning wheels and other sewing devices.

From May to October, there will also be an exhibition titled "Stellar Stitching: 19th Century Samplers in Vermont" exploring how certain textiles were used as tools of learning through needlework samplers made by young girls. The museum will also host a "Sampler ID Day" on Sept. 29 and 30 for the public to bring in their antique stitching samplers to be photographed and documented as contributions to the Sampler Archive Project and the Vermont Statewide Sampler Initiative.

From November to December, the museum will host the Annual Holiday Train Exhibit, which will showcase the elaborate Lionel train layout and a backdrop of the Green Mountains painted by local artist Gayl Braisted.

From May to December, the museum will exhibit some new items from their collections along with supporting objects and archival materials.

The Sheldon Museum will be open Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., beginning in mid-May.

Maggie Reynolds/The Middlebury Campus
The Sheldon Museum will open for the season in mid-May.

Middlebury Money stimulates the economy, keeps dollars local

By MAGGIE REYNOLDS
Senior Local Editor

Middlebury Money offers college students and community members a chance to support the Middlebury economy by keeping their dollars local.

Since the fall of 2018, the Better Middlebury Partnership and the National Bank of Middlebury have partnered on the Middlebury Money initiative, which allows people to get a check from the bank and spend it at any business in town.

"The purpose of Midd Money is to encourage people to keep their dollars local, helping our own community by bolstering our economy," explained Karen Duguay, executive director of the Better Middlebury Partnership.

Middlebury Money can be used at over 100 businesses in town, including American Flatbread, the Marquis Theatre, Haymaker Bun Company and the Middlebury Natural Foods Co-Op. "Any business can take Middlebury Money, and the vast majority of them do," Duguay wrote in an email to The Campus. "If someone doesn't accept it, it's usually because it's a new staff person who might not have seen it before or understand how it works."

Customers can go to the National Bank of Middlebury to purchase Middlebury Money in a unit of $5, $10, $20 or $50. When one buys the money, Duguay wrote, the value is deposited into an account owned by the Better Middlebury Partnership at the bank. Then, when the customer redeems the check at a local business, the money is drawn from the partnership's bank.

If the customer does not end up spending the full amount of the check, the business will give them the remainder of the money as cash back, according to the Better Middlebury Partnership website. "For example, you can buy socks, groceries, dine out and pay your water bill," the website reads. "You can give it as a gift so the recipient can spend it where they want!"

The National Bank of Middlebury doesn't actually benefit from the Middlebury Money initiative, Duguay added, other than that it aligns with their goals of helping the local Middlebury economy. The bank also helps the Better Middlebury Partnership track the purchasing and redemption of the money so they have an idea of how much cash is being used and where.

The Better Middlebury Partnership started the program a couple of years ago, inspired by a number of towns across the country that have had successful local currency programs. A couple other Vermont communities also have, or previously had, similar programs, including Bristol Bucks, Vergennes Green, Burlington Bread, Green Mountain Hours (Montpelier) and Buffalo Mountain Hours (Hardwick).

The partnership has also collaborated with the college Student Government Association (SGA) in the past to put on special events that include the use of Middlebury Money. For example, last December's MiddKid Night allowed Middlebury students to receive $10 in the form of Middlebury Money to be used at nearly any business in town.

According to its website, the Better Middlebury Partnership is "a civic organization dedicated to making the greater Middlebury community a better place to live, work and play."

The partnership has other plans to encourage spending locally, such as the Midd Summer Market series, which will take place every Thursday between June 1 and August 31 at Triangle Park in downtown Middlebury. The market will be open between 3:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. with prepared food, live music, crafts and produce.

The organization is also sponsoring two special pop-up markets in Triangle Park on September 30 and October 7 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., along with a downtown block party on Saturday, July 29, with activities, games, music and food. Main Street will be blocked off to allow maximum space for the event, Duguay wrote.

"It's going to be a full summer of activities," she added.

More information about Middlebury Money and a full list of upcoming Better Middlebury Partnership Events can be found at https://www.experiencemiddlebury.com.

Red or green? I'm not sure.

Notes From the Desk

__Rain Ji__ is a managing editor and a member of the class of 2023.

I have deuteranopia color blindness, a type of color deficiency. Essentially, this means that I have trouble distinguishing certain colors or fully understanding how saturated certain colors are, especially if they are green and red. Thankfully, with technology such as special glasses and visual-aid apps, navigating the world as a person with moderate color deficiency has not been too terrible. In fact, I equally enjoy the beautiful Vermont fall foliage, and I can play Wordle just fine.

Well, that is until I accidentally broke my glasses and had to wait weeks for my mom to ship me a back-up pair. Before my glasses finally arrived at the mail center, navigating Middlebury classrooms and other functions was harder than expected. Sure, I can still use an app on my phone and hold it up to my clothes so I'm not mismatching, but I can't always have a phone pointed at the slides in my classes. In classrooms, previously innocuous tasks like reading red-and-green colored charts or discerning color-coded topography lines suddenly became impossible. During Spring Symposium day, I sat through many informative presentations without understanding anything on the slides because some charts included my least favorite color duo — red and green.

These experiences made me wonder about the ways in which we could all be more mindful of colorblindness. The expensive nature of colorblind glasses — ranging from 120 to 400 dollars without vision insurance — limits their accessibility. Color Blindness affects approximately one in 12 men and one in 200 women, meaning that among the more than 2,500 students of Middlebury, there are likely a lot of people that have color deficiency.

When thinking about how to make classrooms or other settings more accessible to students with color deficiency, try to imagine that colors don't exist.

When thinking about how to make classrooms or other settings more accessible to students with color deficiency, try to imagine that colors don't exist.

It is easy for people with normal color vision to overlook how little adaptations can make one's life easier: For example, when writing notes on the whiteboard, a lot of people opt for red and green markers for the purpose of contrast. Unfortunately, they appear very similar, if not the same, to people with deuteranopia. If you can, avoid using both colors simultaneously to eliminate confusion. If you do not quite feel like abandoning red and green, I would recommend adding different shapes when you use these problematic colors so everyone can tell the difference.

In addition, it is best practice to avoid "green and brown," "green and blue," and "green and yellow" combinations, especially in presentation slides, for similar reasons. Oftentimes, the fewer colors the better. You can always turn your screen into grayscale to see if the colors are contrasting enough for your audience members with colorblindness. In graphs, it is also possible to add "textures" such as stripes or dots to show the differences and highlight them for people with color deficiency.

Awkward situations also arise when a professor asks students to create art involving colors.

Although I have steadfastly avoided classes focused on painting and other visual art mediums, there have been cases where I needed to draw using colored pencils to explain or elaborate an idea for a class project. It is helpful to offer colored pencils or paints that have the colors clearly marked. Although people with deuteranopia cannot tell the differences between green and red hues well, we generally have a pretty good memory of the colors of common objects: for example, I may not know what the Italian flag actually looks like without my special glasses, but I do know that if I were asked to draw it, I should use green, white and red.

It is still possible to take full advantage of the curriculum despite having moderate color deficiency. In the past, I was nervous about enrolling in an art history class as it inevitably involves a lot of colors. But to my surprise, the class I decided to take this semester has not been inaccessible because art historians often give a lot of textual explanations to each work that they analyze. I've been able to use accessibility tools to demarcate different colors when preparing for lessons.

Perhaps we should all think about how to incorporate verbal or textual explanations that make charts, graphs and maps more intuitive for folks who have color deficiency. If accommodations are in place, people with deuteranopia can enjoy any subject as much as everyone else does. All of the above little steps will definitely help us enjoy a more "colorful" world.

REIMAGINING LANDSCAPING ON CAMPUS

Op-Ed

__Aria Bowden__ is a member of the class of 2023, __SJ O'Connor__ is a member of the class of 2024, and __Tim Parsons__ is the landscape horticulturist for the college.

The Middlebury campus is undeniably beautiful, as is the state of Vermont. As spring arrives, we find ourselves eagerly awaiting the emergence of bright buds on trees, the return of green grass and the chance to lay on the lawn basking in the sun. The sprawling quads in some ways feel synonymous with college life; a leftover design choice from a colonial archetype of universities in the western world. The allure of higher education depends on its marketing of students reading books out on the grass, kicking around a soccer ball, or just hanging out with friends. But, do we really need this much lawn to enjoy its recreational benefits? Whether it's used or not, we mow every piece of this college landscape, mostly just out of habit.

What would it look like to rethink this habit? What would it look like to begin to change the way we relate to our campus landscape, and by proxy, our Vermont landscape?

"No Mow zones," or areas of lawn that are left to grow to their full height, besides twice yearly mows, were first introduced in the 2008 Campus Master Plan. Some existed near McCardell Bicentennial Hall, but they didn't quite stick due to a lack of sharing awareness of their value and lack of effective preparation and establishment, leaving the areas overrun with invasive species. Now, 15 years later, Middlebury is far behind some of its counterparts in higher education when it comes to regenerative landscape design. Campuses across the nation are implementing intentional regenerative landscaping design choices. Yet, we are left with boring lawns that are neatly mowed but underused. With Landscape Horticulturist Tim Parsons through the Sustainability Solutions Lab, we have spent the past year researching and envisioning a new landscape management plan for Middlebury's campus.

Currently, 97 acres of lawn are mowed weekly for 24 weeks of the year. This mowing results in 72,621 tons of harmful emissions annually, and it actively disrupts pollinators and wildlife who might otherwise call this campus home. In collaboration with the landscaping department, we have envisioned a 25% reduction in mowed lawns on campus within the next five to 10 years. These otherwise unused lawns will be replaced with native grasses, pollinator gardens and clayplain forest, allowing for the natural beauty of Vermont to be more present on campus. Imagine a campus filled with wildflowers, long swaying grasses, and even more beautiful trees that blaze orange in the fall.

The college strives to be a leader in sustainability in higher education through Energy2028. Reimagining its landscape would contribute to this goal, and we have the chance to be a model for large-scale regenerative and intentional landscape management that actively nourishes its ecological and social community. Further, this shift would give students and professors a greater opportunity to use the landscape as a classroom by observing pollinators or identifying native species for Biology classes or even giving Architecture classes a lens through which to envision effective regenerative and resilient landscape design.

Our work aims to provide a student perspective on what lands are actively used in order to restore ecological habitats in unused areas. This will be achieved through the intentional planting and maintenance of alternate ground cover types in select areas. Actively utilized quads like the Commencement Quad and Battell Beach will be maintained as lawn spaces for students to enjoy. Guidelines on mowing around buildings and walkways will continue to keep mice and ticks at bay. All cover types will be native to Vermont, including longer native fescue grass, clover, pollinator habitats and Clayplain forest plantings.

Courtesy Photo

Beautiful landscape of Middlebury College.

We recognize that this is a far-reaching proposal, the extent of which will likely not be reached for a number of years. We are excited to say, however, that the first step begins this spring. Trial zones in the Davis Family Library Quad will be established in partnership with Middlebury's landscaping and facilities departments. Each new ground cover type will be tested in portions of this quad that are not actively used, and if this trial goes well, it will be extended to other portions of campus over the next few years. As a first step, there will be some herbicide usage to choke out the existing grass and prepare it for fescue, clover and pollinator garden planting. The lawn around Davis might look a little rough for a few weeks, but this small additive usage in order to begin the process does not compare to the environmental impact of continual use of fuel and maintenance needed to upkeep our manicured lawns.

We are excited to share this process with the greater campus community as it evolves. It is exciting to think about the campus that is to come and the ways we can learn from and with the ever-changing Vermont landscape. We are so grateful for the labor the landscaping department does for this campus on a daily basis and for their collaboration in this process. We find it beyond exciting to envision a future campus with more wildflowers, flowing grasses, butterflies and beautiful trees.

For more information please visit go/rewild or go/landscape or reach out to us at sjoconnor@middlebury.edu, abowden@middlebury.edu & tparsons@middlebury.edu

HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

The Campus accepts submissions of opinions, reflections and letters to the editor from all members of our community, every week. Pieces from students, staff and faculty are all welcomed for consideration.

Email

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with submissions.

ON UNDERSTAFFING ACROSS COLLEGE DEPARTMENTS

Editorial

This editorial represents the opinion of The Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

Susanna Schatz

Most current Middlebury students are familiar with a college that is understaffed. In addition to some academic departments being low on faculty, Facilities Services, Custodial Services and Dining Services have battled persistent understaffing since 2020. The degree of this staff shortage has fluctuated over the past few years, in part due to large-scale forces such as the pandemic and the state of the national economy. However, local factors like Middlebury's remote location, the lack of affordable housing in Addison County, non-competitive wages and the new skill matrix and disrespectful student behavior have likewise continually threatened the size of the college's workforce. These past couple of weeks have brought new urgency to the understaffing issue as dining operations, including the Grille, Crossroads and MiddXpress, Davis Family Library, and the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) office have had to reduce their hours or the availability of certain services, leading to frustration among the student body.

The severity of the understaffing crisis and the negative student responses are reflected in last week's Student Government Association presidential campaigns: Candidates made altering the dining hours a central part of their platforms. Many students are especially displeased with the scaling back of Grille and MiddXpress hours, which have been remarkably inconsistent over the past few weeks. This past weekend, students had no dining options after the dining halls closed at 8:30 p.m. Students have become accustomed to relying on MiddXpress and the Grille for food on weekend nights, and we are concerned that without on-campus snack options, students may choose to drive under the influence to purchase food in town at places like McDonalds or local gas stations.

Unfavorable student behavior may partly explain the staffing shortage within Dining Services and Custodial Services. Unfortunately, the night shift at the Grille sometimes means serving intoxicated students, who can be difficult to serve and are at times disrespectful of the space and staff. Additionally, vandalism and the destruction of campus spaces continue to be rampant this spring, necessitating that custodial staff repair broken windows, pick up littered beer cans and shattered liquor bottles from sidewalks, return dirty dishes to the dining halls and take apart sculptures constructed from patio furniture in the late-night hours. Beyond this behavior that can make Middlebury an unpleasant place to work, students display entitlement and a lack of interest in the well-being of staff members when they conduct themselves in this way. When staff members are already considering leaving due to other factors, poor student behavior may be their last straw.

While dining has been routinely understaffed since the pandemic, the library and ISSS office understaffing are newer developments. After four librarians left their positions, students have struggled with reduced research desk hours, and the library has had to delay its collections development review process. Vacancies in the ISSS office are disrupting the collection of paperwork necessary for international students to obtain U.S. Visas and apply for off-campus employment. The staff who remain are doing their best to continue to serve the needs of students, but they shouldn't have to work harder and longer hours than they signed up for.

The lack of affordable housing in Addison County has also intensified the staffing crisis. Many staff members cannot afford to live in Addison County and thus have more expensive and time-consuming commutes. The administration should better support workers in their search for affordable housing and childcare through stipends, especially while the Summit Properties development is still in progress.

The implementation of the skill matrix last fall has led to some staff feeling undervalued, similarly accelerating the staffing shortage — particularly in Davis Family Library — this spring. Under the skill matrix system, some staff members have effectively received a pay cut even when they work harder and longer than their job description outlines. At Middlebury, longevity and commitment to the institution is no longer rewarded with higher pay. The raise that this change afforded lower-paid staff members is a vital, positive step, but it cannot heal a college culture unwilling to support its employees in the long-term. What is more, many businesses in town offer higher wages than the college. Middlebury must offer its staff higher, more competitive wages that take time spent working for the college into account if it wants to fix the seemingly perpetual and worsening understaffing problem.

The staffing shortage cannot go on. To the extent that students can make a difference, we must take responsibility for the way our behavior and the behavior of our peers shapes staff experiences. It is disconcerting to think what would happen if the situation got worse — the closure of one of the three dining halls, the closure of the research desk or increased difficulty getting the necessary documents for employment. While there are many positive student-staff relationships, on the whole, the college does not always make Middlebury an appealing place to work, and student behavior contributes to that. From broken glass after weekend parties to blatant disrespect at late-night dining options, some students show a persistent unwillingness to consider the human beings who end up dealing with these choices. Drunkenness is not an excuse. Even saying "hi" to staff members or asking "how are you?" in the halls and dining lines is a small gesture of respect that may not solve the understaffing challenges at the college, but will contribute to a more positive culture of respect for staff. More importantly, students need to speak up when they see their peers — even friends — engaging in disrespectful and destructive behavior. Solving the problem would require Middlebury to start paying staff competitive wages with opportunities for growth. But as students, we must do our part in recognizing that our behavior has a very real effect on the lives of staff members.

What is up with all these events about Israel?

Op-Ed

***Joshua Glucksman** is a member of the class of 2024.5*

Israel has been changing in character to become a more authoritarian regime. There has been a documented increase in settler violence, acts of terror, far-right ideology and, of course, democratic backsliding due to ongoing judicial "reforms." To understand this trend, as many political scientists all over the world and at Middlebury are attempting to do, there seem to be two distinct "critical" narratives that emerge. The first narrative is a predominantly liberal Zionist view that Israel's shift to authoritarianism is unexpected and requires protest, and, second, a view held by more radical voices, is that this "shift" is the logical conclusion to the contradictions inherent in a state that forcibly displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians (and is continually trying to).

To illustrate better what I mean by these two types of narratives, I want to be clear that I am in no way saying that Israelis cannot be pro-Palestinian or adopt a radical anaylsis of current events. For instance, Robert R. Churchill Professor of Geosciences Tamar Mayer gave a talk April 10 outlining the historical context for the right wing shift in Israel and the key players in the nation's march toward passing the judicial "reforms." Mayer's talk incorporated Palestinian perspectives when discussing the nuances of Palestinian hesitance to join the protests against the reforms. Many radical scholars would call the protest movement a "struggle within a struggle," noting that the kind of "democracy" being defended does not reflect a demand for equality for all. What was missing from this talk and many others was a Palestinian narrative, which is not a single essentialized thing, but is rather, as Palestinian-American academic Edward Said explained, the common experience of oppression and dispossession that exists across generations and throughout the entire world for Palestinians.

Growing up in a Jewish community that did not adequately educate me about the plight of the Palestinian people, I came to Middlebury wanting to hear from as many Palestinian voices as possible. Especially because of recent political trends, I have gone to most of the events about Israel and Palestine in the past two years, and, unfortunately, I have seen how the discourse at Middlebury is dominated by non-Palestinian perspectives, which reflects deeper dynamics of fear experienced at the college. I want to make it clear that these very dynamics make the stakes of writing this article high: I had to omit from this article many conversations with students, staff and faculty on campus involved with Palestinian justice work due to their fear of repercussions, whether from organizations that collect information on critics of Israel or from those who misconstrue criticism of Israel as antisemitism.

Palestinian activism seemed to be on the rise in the past few years at Middlebury. In 2019, a demonstration led by the college's Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) chapter sent a message to a visiting Israeli diplomat that whitewashing crimes committed by the Israeli Defense Forces will not be tolerated, and again in 2020, a talk about the U.S.-Israel military partnership by a former ambassador was met with contested protests. Activism seemed to peak in May of 2021 with a large SJP campaign about the operation in Gaza. Since then, there has been a considerable decline, as seen by the current inactive status of SJP. There have been only two events that focus on Palestinians; one in the fall of 2021 about Palestinian political expression, and the other in fall of 2022, an Arabic department reading of famous Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish's work, which did not explicitly center Palestinian issues.

Conversely, there have been more events about Israel than ever: Students and faculty are requesting the speakers, and they come. Interestingly, this is coming at a time when there is less consistent resistance to the events like there was in the past, and those being invited comprise some of the most left-wing voices in Israel. Just take the names of the eleven Israel events that have happened in the past two years: Two of the events were criticisms of Israeli's rightward shift, two outlined movements in Israel to call for inclusivity and left-wing values, one detailed early alternatives to mainstream Zionism, one was a movie screening of an Israeli lawyer defending Palestinians and then two "apolitical" events were about cybersecurity and motherhood in Israel. Just in the past week, there were three events, a talk given by a member of the biggest band in Israel, a conversation with an Israeli trans activist and a movie about a shooting that featured Arab voices.

To caution against superficial, band-aid solutions that hyperfixate on numerical parity of events, I want to clarify that my proposed solution is not to simply increase Palestine events on campus and/or decrease Israel ones. I am instead proposing that a framework of liberation be utilized by faculty and administration to account for power imbalances and historical injustice. For instance, I have personally found some of the Israeli speakers who have contributed novel research and interesting ideas about Zionism and Israeli oppression very insightful, but I understand that none can offer vital, personal experiences of the ongoing injustice since the creation of the state of Israel.

Now you might be asking, why is nothing being done to bring Palestinian voices to Middlebury? Through many conversations, I have uncovered lots of complex and simple answers, but one of the most stark is the well-documented silencing of pro-Palestinian faculty on college campuses. Professor of History Febe Armanios reflected on how this dynamic plays out here at Middlebury with untenured faculty. "Despite its two centuries of engagement with the Middle East — whether through Christian missionaries or study abroad programs — and its pioneering efforts to promote the study of Arabic, Middlebury hasn't been immune to national trends," Armanios said. "Campus culture has often made it difficult for untenured faculty to speak about the complexity of these issues and to teach about Palestinian perspectives, identity and history."

Joshua Glucksman

This campus culture is not limited to professors, and has caused much hostility towards Palestinian students as well. Huthefa Maalim '24.5, who is not Palestinian but has been a part of SJP during his time at Middlebury, reflected specifically on the challenges of bringing Palestinian voices to campus. "Middlebury needs more diversity of political thought. This is made harder when those of us who are passionate about the Palestinian cause have to be careful when expressing our opinions for fear of negative repercussions that might ensue. We are afraid to risk our image, career prospects or even for some of my Palestinian friends, the ability to return home to their families," Maalim said.

However, Maalim remained hopeful about the capacity for students to transcend these problems and take part in the long tradition of Palestinian activism on campus. "I am encouraged by Middlebury students' zeal for knowledge and believe that if provided with enough information they will unite to advocate for justice and equality. That is why clubs like SJP are important and should be revived," he said.

I too feel hopeful about student activism and keeping our community connected and educated about Palestinian justice. I would urge anyone reading this who wants to stay informed on future happenings and to express interest in getting involved to follow @sjp_middlebury on Instagram.

The Middlebury Campus

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The Middlebury Campus

You can't have your cake and eat it too

Letter to the Editor

Gage Schrier is a member of the class of 2024.5 and Sarah Miller is a member of the class of 2024.

Last week, the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board used their platform to call upon the administration and professors to address what they perceive to be a pressing campus issue: insufficient free time. We don't disagree with the general thrust of their argument. Access to nature is an essential aspect of Middlebury. Our natural setting attracts many students to apply in the first place, and nature has been proven to improve mental health. We take issue with how the Editorial Board infantilized the student body in the service of their argument and failed to recognize the priorities of many students they aim to help.

Though the editorial recognizes Middlebury as "first and foremost an academic institution," many of the Board's proposals seem to promote an ethos of leisure at the expense of intellectualism. As students without vehicle access, we support the call for better public transportation to the outdoors. However, our grievance lies with the Board's suggestion that professors ease up on the work in order to "spring us from our academic cage."

The Editorial Board's plea that the school help us escape our "academic cage" fails to recognize Middlebury's mission: the "academic cage" offers more freedom than restraint. Many people have worked their entire lives to come to a prestigious institution like Middlebury and will reap its benefits for generations to come. By characterizing Middlebury's workload as "a cage," the Editorial Board casts learning as oppressive, when it is in fact the very reason we are here. After all, there are far less expensive ways to have fun. We suggest Mykonos.

Decreasing academic standards by encouraging professors to assign less work has the potential to negatively harm our school's intellectual reputation and decrease the benefits of our diplomas. We understand that the Editorial Board does not speak for everyone, but we want to emphasize that decreasing our school's academic standards is contrary to students' long-term benefit.

The Board advises students to learn to prioritize what matters to them. We agree that learning to balance work and play is one of the most critical skills college teaches us, but this skill set should be entirely self-directed and not at the expense of academic priorities. We can't learn to prioritize if we never find out, through trial and error, what is truly worth our time. Spending an afternoon at the lake instead of working on a paper may result in a worse grade. It is up to us to decide if taking the trip is worth the B.

However, rather than harping on disagreement, we wish to use the Board's editorial to make our own argument about how best to shape Middlebury culture. Among some students, the idea that any fun will come at the expense of their GPA seems to be an intolerable cost. We believe deciding whether to take that cost is an essential part of our education. The problem arises when students expect an A while neglecting their academic responsibilities. That attitude, implicit in the notion that our standards should decrease when it's sunny, makes our community seem lazy and entitled.

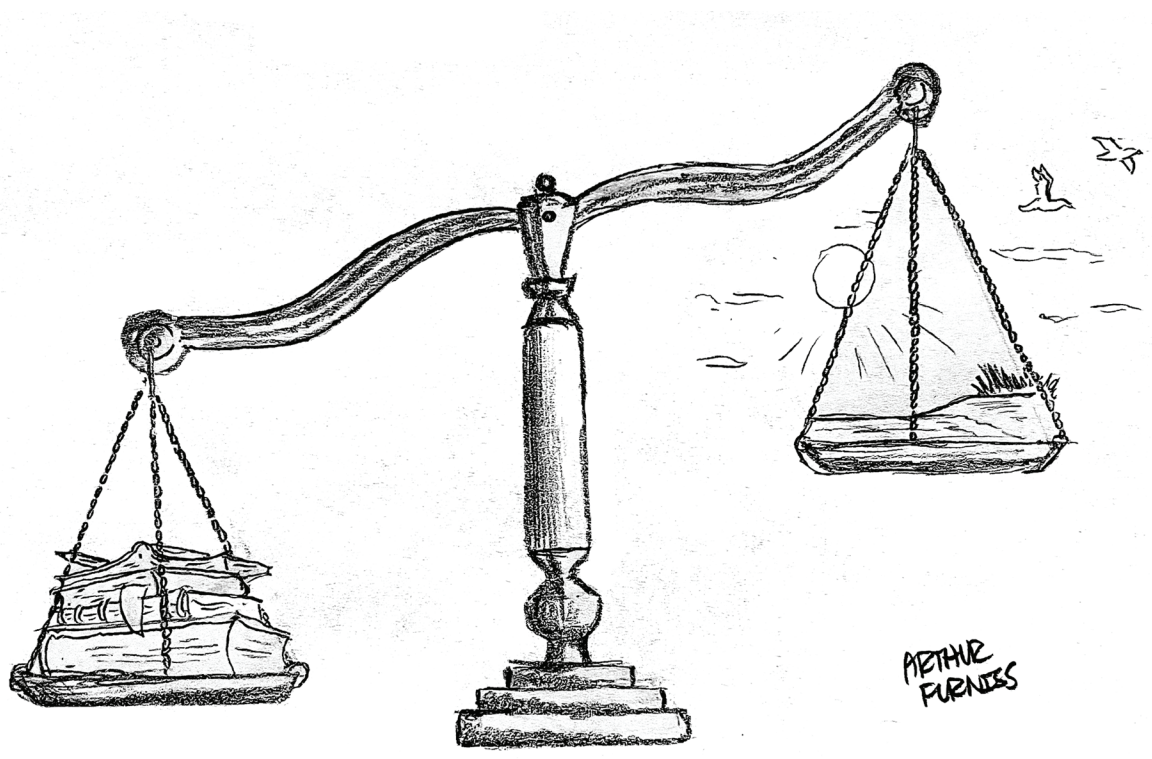
Student entitlement is inextricable from the rampant grade inflation at Middlebury. We would like to advocate for more meaningful grading and a return to cultural curiosity. Though common in recent years, grade inflation runs contrary to Middlebury's identity. Before we entered college, we were told by teachers that college was different from high school: an A was the mark of exceptional work. In our experience, Middlebury students expect A's for average work; anything else is an exception. While that might be a comfortable rule in the short-term, it is a shame. We chose Middlebury because we craved an intellectual challenge as much as we craved the Green Mountain skyline. We wanted our minds to be stretched and our ideas challenged, even if we had fewer days outside or our GPAs fell a few tenths.

We do not wish to attack the Editorial Board's emphasis on mental health. Keeping people safe is the top priority. However, we believe self-improvement lies at the root of wellness. Intellectual growth promotes long-term wellness by spurring self-growth and fulfillment. Wellness is not an excuse to avoid hardship but a challenge to skillfully and safely navigate it in pursuit of long-term benefits. Truly emphasizing wellness does not mean eliminating challenges, but creating people who can face them. Healthy people understand how to deal with inevitable disasters because they have had experience solving them in a supportive environment. Taking away our opportunity to face emotional and academic challenges fails to nurture our growth and prepare us for post-grad life.

If your top priority is not school, that is your prerogative. Often, the blind pursuit of an A is contrary to learning. Prioritizing learning means incorporating wellness and understanding that our actions, like going on a hike instead of doing a reading, should be reflected in our final grades. There is a particular entitlement in treating Middlebury like a summer camp, subordinating learning and growth to "fun" and "relaxation." You are not entitled to an A. Professors should only give top marks to students who produce outstanding work. Everyone who prioritizes other growth forms should accept the costs of such pursuits and be proud of their work. An A- or a B+ is not the end of the world.

Additionally, we may have to consider the possibility that professors and career administrators better understand our interests than we think. We reserve the right to protest for more free time. However, Middlebury's primary duty is not to accommodate our short-term comfort but to help us reach long-term goals. It may be more productive to advocate for what we want Middlebury to help us become than to complain about how they go about it. We sought out this institution because we trusted it to educate us and help us fulfill our dreams. That should not change because it's sundress season. A stressful weekend in Davis is much less detrimental to "long-term health" than realizing you have failed to reap the benefits of your expensive education. After all, the freedom of wide-ranging intellectual exploration is unique to undergrad. At no other point in our lives will we be able to exist in a community whose primary purpose is to nurture our curiosity and quests for self-actualization.

Though it might not always feel like it, our time at Middlebury is decidedly finite. In four blinks of an eye, undergrad passes and we're kicked out of the nest into the "real world" where, excepting grad school, our previous academic preoccupations are obsolete. For some students, this might come as a relief. For many, it will fall as a blow. In this piece, we have urged students to strive for a higher degree of intellectual fervor. The liberal arts require us to be actively curious to maximize utility. As Middlebury students, we are all bound by the fact that we sought a specialized model of education which aims to immerse us in "the life of the mind and soul" and prepare us to change the world. We can scrutinize the success of that promise, but we, obscure moralists, would like to believe in the ambition of its mission. Our Middlebury education begs to be put to good use. We can not return the privilege afforded to us if we don't take advantage of our intellectual opportunities while we're still able.



Response to the Letter to the Editor

Notes from the Desk

Abigail Chang '23, Rain Ji '23 & Tony Sjodin '23 are members of the Executive Team of The Middlebury Campus; Lily Laesch '23 is the Editorial Board Director of The Middlebury Campus.

Last Thursday, we published what we expected to be one of our least controversial editorials of the semester: another opinion piece centered around work-life balance and managing the pressures of Middlebury's busyness culture. We've opined on this topic before without inciting outrage — so we were surprised to receive a Letter to the Editor entitled "You can't have your cake and eat it too" that criticized both this editorial and the Editorial Board that penned it.

We regret that our arguments and recommendations were misconstrued in this Letter. As members of the Executive Team and the Editorial Board Director of The Campus, we wanted to reiterate the focus of our piece and refute the claims made in this Letter regarding our editorial and its authors.

We recommend, for any reader who has not yet done so, taking a moment to scan the editorial that inspired the Letter in our Opinions section this week. At its core, the editorial provides recommendations for how to achieve balance amid the general rigor of academic work, the pressures of competitive busyness culture, the additional stress of upcoming finals and the tantalizing prospect of a warm Vermont spring day.

The opening line of the Letter misunderstands the focus, argument and audience for our editorial: "Last week, the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board used their platform to call upon the administration and professors to address what they perceive to be a pressing campus issue: insufficient free time." Reading beyond a literal interpretation of the season-inspired pun in our editorial's headline demonstrates that, to the contrary, we argued, "It is vital to students' long-term health, happiness, and productivity that we — with the support of administrators and faculty — find ways to balance relaxation and work."

We dove into this topic with four suggestions for how "we" — students — can take charge of this balancing act in our own lives. The Letter claims that we "infantilized" our peers, missing the emphasis on students as the primary audience and actors for these choices. We noted that work can continue outdoors or with the windows open. We argued that sometimes the best choice for our mental and academic health is to say "no" to invitations from friends, opting instead for an afternoon spent tucked away in a dark study space.

Nowhere in our editorial did we suggest that students forgo their academic work for the sake of more free time. Instead, we recommended that students recognize their own limits: Knowing when to take a break is an important skill for preventing burnout and ensuring one's ability to stay engaged and productive in the long run.

We encouraged students to prioritize, saying, "There are most certainly times when you need to sit down and grind. But on days when you don't have an important deadline and the opportunity presents itself to do something fun, consider going outside and coming to terms with the fact that sometimes, it's not always necessary to read every word of every reading for every class." We invited students to weigh what matters to them.

We never made the case that there wouldn't — or shouldn't — be any consequences for putting off work, nor that professors should build more space for leisure into their syllabi. Rather, we hoped to promote a culture where it's possible to put an assignment in perspective. Self worth should not be tied to academic performance — we would graduate less impressive students if our only values and virtues were high grades. And, ultimately, it is up to each student to decide where their priorities lie — as we said in the title of our last editorial on busyness culture, "to each their own balance."

The claim that "a stressful weekend in Davis" is preferable to our health over "realizing you have failed to reap the benefits of your expensive education," is an especially insensitive reply to the first editorial we published after our piece addressing the impact of an active shooter threat in Davis Family Library. If members of our Executive Team and staff — who were there working late into the night when armed police responded to a possible threat against their lives — sought ways to reduce stress and share them with other students affected by the same event in the following week, we regret that such actions made the college community "seem lazy and entitled."

We wrote this editorial understanding that not everyone in our community has equal opportunity to interact with the kinds of "intellectual opportunities" championed in the Letter. Because of this, we were especially distressed by the way the authors interpreted our editorial as entitled — describing it as a request for lower standards amid "sundress season" and sarcastically recommending Mykonos if students were looking for cheaper fun than a college degree. Many students work jobs on top of completing academic work, others are grappling with the burden of looming student loans and some are struggling to stay afloat amid mental health issues. For those with additional financial or familial pressures, it can be very hard to choose to take a break — but that doesn't make a break any less important. In hopes of easing the choice to take time off when needed, we made suggestions for how to balance work and breaks, and we called on the college to make these choices more accessible.

Suggesting that students need to experience adversity in a "supportive environment" in order to prepare them for future hardships perpetuates a philosophy that minimizes the impacts of harm or trauma to advance an idea of intellectual prestige. (And whether you consider this a "supportive environment" in the first place might depend on your identities and previous access to resources.) We're not asking to be babied. We're not promoting the idea of "treating Middlebury like a summer camp." We simply don't believe in advancing "intellectualism" at the expense of mental health or long-term learning and curiosity.

The sole part of last week's editorial that could have been construed in any way as the Editorial Board's advocacy for, as the Letter described it, "decreasing academic standards" is the second bullet point of our recommendations for faculty and administrators. We asked for professors to be "intentional and understanding with the work they give" — a reference to "busy work." Most assignments, especially around finals season, are substantive projects and tests that push students to grow intellectually. We did not suggest that professors do away with final exams; we asked only that the work assigned to us is meaningful, so that our time is spent developing the skills and knowledge that will best help us in life.

The other three requests directed at administrators and faculty sought improved transportation to outdoor spaces for more equitable access, which the authors of the Letter agreed should exist. We asked professors to consider teaching classes outdoors and for the administration to embrace traditions like Williams College's Mountain Day, where classes on a single Friday each year are canceled to allow students to enjoy the outdoor spaces of rural New England.

We regret that what was meant as a lighthearted editorial about the coming of spring was interpreted as a critique of Middlebury's rigorous academic nature. This is not the argument we had hoped to generate, nor one we expected to rehash this week. However, we stand by the message of our editorial: There are ways that students can find balance between work and relaxation. Breaks from work spent in nature have been shown to promote productivity and wellbeing. Time spent enjoying the spring is as vital to students' mental health as it is to their work — a well-rested student is a more focused, creative and engaged student.

We were surprised by the suggestion that we, students whose extracurricular of choice is putting out a 12-page newspaper each week, have "failed to recognize the priorities" of many of our peers — those priorities being academic rigor and "intellectualism." Members of the Executive Team spend dozens of hours in the basement of Hepburn, week after week, working on The Campus while balancing academic and paid work. To suggest that the most valuable learning always happens in the classroom — or is best expressed by the pursuit of "intellectualism" — is to present a narrow and prescriptive definition of education.

We wish that this Letter had been submitted as an op-ed — the vast majority of it could have served as an independent opinion piece on grade inflation or students' attitudes towards academics. Unfortunately, it was submitted in reference to our editorial and presented arguments disconnected from the content of that piece to a degree that suggests, at best, a severe misreading of a piece of writing meant to provide advice to our community.

To suggest we are promoting "an ethos of leisure at the expense of intellectualism" misunderstands the scope of education at Middlebury, which is enhanced by experiences beyond the classroom. The word "school" itself derives from an ancient term used to describe time spent learning outside of work and play — it comes from the Greek word for "leisure."

THE MIDDLEBURY MUSIC EXPLOSION

Courtesy Photo

Otter Creek Bluegrass Band posing before a show.

By BRETT SORBO
Staff Writer

Middlebury is home to a variety of distinct bands and solo artists. While bands may form on their own, many jump at new opportunities to make music with people they meet through the college's ensembles, such as the Afropop Band, Jazz Workshop, the college choir and the college orchestra. For those who are not involved in these settings, showing up to WOMP (short for "Wednesday Open Mic Party") in the Gamut Room is a classic introduction to Middlebury's live music scene.

While all of these events and organizations existed at pre-pandemic Middlebury, there used to be only a small number of acts who would perform regularly. Seniors may remember some of these household names from their first year, such as The Big Sip, 10" Personal Pizza or Gemma Laurence.

"I remember our first shows had like 10 people in the Gamut Room, mostly our close friends," said Ben Arriola '23, a founding member of the popular campus band Bottle Rocket. "Then I remember returning from my semester off during the pandemic, and suddenly it was packed with people. Now, there are so many great bands and more venues hosting live music. "

> "Many jump at new opportunities to make music with folks they meet through the college's ensembles."

Another favorite act over the past two years, Mutual Friends, was one of the first bands to emerge after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. They consistently perform at WOMP, Brooker House, the Mill and elsewhere, attracting crowds with their catchy lyrics, instrumental breaks and a whole lot of funk.

Yet beyond the continuing success of Bottle Rocket and Mutual Friends, this year has brought a fresh slate of acts, and while some of them (such as Brühm and Griefcase) formed this fall or last spring, most of them emerged during a music-drenched J-Term. On most weekends, new bands came about to play shows at the Mill, where Afropop headlined weekly. For aspiring players, music became a daily routine, and members of different bands often encountered each other at the Mahaney Arts Center or in Proctor and connected over shared musical interests. Even a simple joke could spring a series of ideas, leading into a seminal question, "Wanna jam sometime?"

Many of these new groups are quite inventive, often blurring or subverting lines between genres. Scrapefruit, the brainchild of Noah Hochfelder '22.5 (bass), Cooper Lamb '23 (tenor saxophone), Finn Lester-Niles '23 (drums) and Asa Skinder '23 (guitar), is Middlebury's resident avant-garde punk project. Current vocalist Chad Kim '23.5 describes the band's craft. "We'll spend some time workshopping a sound if someone has an inkling of inspiration," Kim said. "It's kind of like being in a shared echo chamber where you can understand each other's minds."

For other musicians, playing in a band at Middlebury has been the actualization of a first-year dream.

> "It's kind of like being in a shared echo chamber where you can understand each other's minds."

Bobby's Short Shorts, a Grateful Dead cover band, arose from Zev York '23.5's (guitar/vocals) desire to revive a counterculture spirit through extended jam numbers. "My first weekends at Middlebury were filled with the sonic grooves of Grateful Dead jams," York said. "What better way is there to celebrate the very reason I started playing guitar?"

Other groups like the Middlebury Jazz Messengers (MJM) or Otter Creek Bluegrass (OCB) primarily play music from certain musical traditions. MJM often rotates personnel depending on who's available at any given WOMP, although the group's mainstays are Scott Li '23.5 (piano/tenor saxophone) and Shengquan (Will) Wang '26 (trombone/vocals). OCB, formerly known as Skunk Hollow, graduated three of its founding members last year, yet Will Behm '22 (guitar/vocals) happily drives down from Burlington to meet up and perform with Lester-Niles (bass), Katie Loomis-Adams '26.5 (fiddle), and Skinder (mandolin). You can catch OCB this Friday, April 28 at 6:30 p.m. at Weybridge House's semesterly feast.

While these bands consist of mostly upperclassmen, there is a serious contingent of underclassmen acts making their presence known. Soop Spoons is a group of five sophomores who play various folk-adjacent covers, flexing their instrumental versatility and seamless chemistry. Brand new to the scene, Chapel Hill, led by Greg Marcinik '25.5 (bass/keys), is a rock band that played at WOMP this week and sang "Kyiv," a song with Ukrainian lyrics.

The Baby Febs have also mobilized, as Lincoln Pierce '26.5 (trumpet) introduced his group Febs with Benefits two weeks ago at an outdoor WOMP.

There are also various solo acts. When not leading her rock band, Starburn, Marina Prikis '25 lends her powerful voice to original compositions and covers at WOMP. Kosmo (Aakhut Khepra '26), a rapper who refers to his style as "galaxy trap," opened for Sage the Gemini a few weeks ago in Kenyon Arena, having come onto the scene at the Mill and WOMP.

Kosmo is a dogged advocate for expanding Middlebury's live music options beyond what they are now.

"The Middlebury music scene is a family. As soon as I got here I received a warm welcome," Kosmo said. "I wanna transform it into more of a culture, a movement that everybody can have fun with. Having a music culture can be a life changing experience."

While the pandemic stalled many college traditions, it opened a rich opportunity for more people to intentionally craft culture. Middlebury's burgeoning musical identity is the most poignant example of how students are making something fresh that future generations can latch onto, build upon or redesign.

> "For folks who don't play music, there are so many ways to make stuff happen."

For students who don't play music, there are many ways to make stuff happen. This J-Term was a glorious time for music, and none of it would've happened without some facilitators, meaning people who handle audio tech setup, decorating and advertising. Isaac Danuloff '23 reflects on how he and his friends worked to support the scene. "The creativity is all here. It's inside of the people on campus," Danuloff admits. "Our role was simply to create an intentional space for it."

The scene will be on display this weekend, with MiddChella (rap concert) this Friday, April 28 at 9:00 p.m. in Wilson Hall and Nocturne outside all evening on Saturday, April 29 (rain date is Saturday, May 6). You may find yourself dancing in a way that you didn't think was possible, or you may find yourself meeting some new folks. Don't hesitate – even in a mosh pit.

Courtesy Photo

Students enjoying the music scene at The Mill.

Courtesy Photo

Jazz workshop at work.

MARRIAGE TALK AS AN INTRAMURAL SPORT, THE REMIX

By ELIZA KING FREEDMAN & MAGGIE BRYAN
Senior Arts & Culture Editor & Arts and Culture Editor

"Look to your left, look to your right: Two out of three of you will marry a Middlebury graduate," is what many Middlebury alumni were told at their respective Convocations, per the New York Times article from which our title derives. Past presidents were justified in their warnings, as the percentage of Middlebury graduates who marry each other is reported to be over 60% (though the exact percentage is debatable).

While we may not acknowledge these staggering statistics in our day-to-day, hookup-culture-infused lives at Middlebury, based on the number of mock weddings that occur on campus, it is clear that marriage lurks in the back of our minds. Though these parties may be "fake" and "pretend," the only "real" thing missing from most of them is a marriage license. So, besides the statistically proven emotional attachment to holy matrimony that comes with the title of "MiddKid," what is it about these parties that make them so popular?

As journalists, we have both spent our last few weeks undercover, surveying the social scene at Middlebury College. We have attended "screws," themeless "parties" and "wine nights." Our conclusion? Middlebury is too good for these underwhelming, lazily planned charades. We yearn for something new, something that caters to the proven values of students destined for the altar. We present to you, the wedding.

Performing a wedding takes effort. There is a dress code, often a hired band, maybe food, an ordained minister and sometimes the bride or groom's real-life partner even enters the scene to duke it out with their role-playing competitor for the day. It's drama. But what comes of the blood, sweat and tears of wedding-planning is often a day-long saga that stands out in our memories. Guests are given roles to play and costumes to wear, and we all practice for the inevitable marriages that will happen (inevitably) between two out of three of us in the very near future.

"I wanted a wedding because it has a whole choreography to it, a ceremony, roles etc. It's not just a themed party but something bordering on performance art if you dare," reflected veteran fake-wedding-thrower Liv Cohen '23.5.

Are you sold yet? We are. Let's talk logistics.

At other schools, weddings are mostly reserved for fraternity-related gatherings. For example, this past February, the internet was famously graced with the "frat wedding" of TikTok star Alix Earle at the University of Miami, which skyrocketed fake wedding culture into a new sphere of relevance. The beauty of the Middlebury wedding, though, is that unlike other party formats, the ability to host and attend (and marry) isn't reserved for sports teams or clubs. In fact, at Middlebury, anyone can host a wedding. Contrary to the confinement of real-life marriage, the fake wedding offers a spiritual release from typical social circles and norms, one that inspires feelings of comfort and warmth.

"The structured nature of the wedding allows for everyone to feel like they're participating in a show of sorts. Overall, I left feeling entertained and warm, like I had been a part of a collective hug," reminisced one-time fake wedding attendee Andrew Neumann '25.

While many Middlebury social events come with an assumed uniform, weddings allow for a new level of self-expression that sits at the intersection between individuality and extravagance. Guests don their best garb — ranging from long, flowing dresses to prim and proper suits to bolo ties and leather vests to, even, full-blown animal costumes. The wedding is like a red carpet, and what comes of the final product is nothing less than its own Met Gala.

Beyond simply offering the freedom to dress more joyously than one would for a date party or an ever-dreaded Atwater party, weddings offer a musical palette that diverges from the sounds threatening to break the speakers of male athletes everywhere. Wedding throwers often collaborate with on-campus bluegrass and jazz bands to create an atmosphere that allows for light conversation, subtle foot-tapping and enthusiastic swing dancing all at once.

Matching the mood of twangy upbeat music, weddings are commonly hosted outdoors, a refreshing change of scenery from sweat-dripping-from-the-ceilings, dark, terrible, just the worst: Atwater. Though the feeling of fresh air alone would be quite enough, weddings tend to come with hay bales and twinkling lights and, for this reason, are best suited for spring and fall.

Courtesy of Martine Ma

Student-planned wedding on November 12, 2022 .

"Playing at a fake wedding and fake prom was great for my band since we got to try out our set in new situations without the pressure of having to play at someone's real wedding. Also, they've been great events to play bluegrass at since they've been in relaxed, outdoor settings where we don't have to compete with as much noise to be heard (compared to something indoors)," said member of the popularly fake-wedding-employed Otter Creek Bluegrass Band Asa Skinder '23.

The phenomenon of fake weddings provides, in a word, liberation. But it isn't the only way. Through our research and undercover investigation, we've come to endorse other nuanced and revolutionary party themes. For example, just this past weekend, we had the utmost privilege of attending a fake prom. What resulted was a mutual effort among all guests to "prompose" to each other, to dress to the nines and to spread joy and love. And though it is not quite in line with our core values (matrimony) in the way that a wedding is, prom is the first step toward "forever." Other fun and divergent ideas for how to spice up your Middlebury social life, taking back the reins from dwellers of Atwater suites past and present, are perhaps a formal dinner party, a themed bonfire or even an acted-out murder trial.

Consider this article the nudge you needed (whether or not you wanted it) to plan a wedding. We're all going to marry each other anyway.

WAITING TO WADING

By EDYTH MOLDOW
Staff Writer

Your limbs look like
Pottery shards to me.
Held softly in the silence
As we watch the terracotta scenes unfold
Careening into a world where hieroglyphs contained multitudes
Language-building pyramids bejeweled with jade

Like eyes

My back turned to you, your mind turned to me.

That night, pretending to be flying machines
Watching for the first time as the night
Unfurled its dark eyebrows
And unpinned its dark tresses before us,
Umbrella clasped in summer remission
September cradling us on a plane made for two challengers

Pulling the starry neckline of the sky to pocket just a few stars.

Always standing on some sort of precipice, always neutral ground
In each other's doorways
Knowing that if we
Broke the seams with a wire cutter, we'd end up
In each other's dreams
Finding ground where there is air, finding air where there shouldn't be ground
Painting, etching
Until we recount, again, our own history.

A SEMESTER WITHOUT MOTH-UP

By SOPHIA AFSAR-KESHMIRI
Opinions Editor

Courtesy Photo

The show's sudden stopcan be attributed to a perfect storm of producers going abroad, graduating.

Those who enjoy the monthly reveal of the Middlebury Moth-Up theme on their way into Proctor Dining Hall will notice that this semester, the bulletin board lacks its typical vibrant posters highlighting creative storytelling themes, like "Fluke," "Lost and Found" and "Meta." This beloved storytelling event, inspired by The Moth storytelling collective of a similar name, has disappeared from the arts scene on campus. As a tried and true Middlebury classic, many have been left wondering: Where did it go?

According to Moth-Up producer Rach Peck '25, the show's sudden stop can be attributed to a perfect storm of producers going abroad, graduating — the organization's longtime president, Elissa Asch '22.5, graduated this past February — and remaining producers' inability to take on a more significant time commitment with the organization.

"The sort of core crew went down to two people and two others who are willing to help out here and there," Peck explained. "The standard Moth-Up show involves four or five storytellers, who each meet with a producer a couple of times a week leading up to the show for anywhere from a month to three weeks beforehand."

"We need, really, four producers who can commit to that, and we only have two, and also to do event requests and set up the event and advertising," Peck continued.

Keziah Wilde '24, an on-campus producer who has expressed continued interest in producing, but not taking on the time commitment of a leadership position, echoed this sentiment.

"It takes maybe three or four people who are interested. And so we don't have the numbers," Wilde said.

Peck and Wilde shared similar sentiments on what the show adds to the arts scene on campus. "I think that it just offers people the opportunity to tell a story that's meaningful to them, to be involved in a one-time performance that's low stakes and authentic," Peck said.

Peck had seemingly unlimited praise for the event. "I think it's also really accessible for people from any realm of the school...who [have] a story that feels important to them that they want to tell," Peck said. "I think that it's just, it's a wonderful little space and I think it really well emulates the format that it was inspired by," they enthused.

Wilde also noted the event's ability to attract participants with a wide range of storytelling experience. "What's nice is when people who don't usually do any other performance come and do a story, because we'll sometimes get random people who fill out the form, like people who don't have any history in theater, performing or anything, but are interested in telling one story one time, and so I think that's really cool."

For Grace Sokolow '24.5, the club served just the purpose that Peck and Wilde emphasize. A lifelong lover of The Moth podcast, she says she was first inspired to tell a story at Middlebury Moth-Up after seeing Wilde, her good friend, perform at an event.

Now, Sokolow is a veteran storyteller, having performed at two Middlebury Moth-Ups, two of The Moth's StorySLAM events in Seattle and Middlebury's 10th annual Cocoon, which follows Moth-Up's format but draws from more storytellers and a larger audience.

She was sad to hear that the event has been paused but understood the significant time commitment producers make to put on the show each month.

Despite the organization's dormancy thus far this semester, Peck said that the group is planning a video project for the upcoming Nocturne Arts Festival on April 29.

According to Peck, the theme of the video project is "New Perspective," and it will include a variety of stories solicited from people who have expressed interest in Moth-Up. Eventually, all of the stories will be put together into a short film, projected to play on a loop on the wall of the Chapel facing Stewart Hall.

Peck is confident that Moth-Up will come back. "It's gone into slight hibernation. We're still around," Peck said.

BUCKLE UP FOR DESTROYING ANGELS

By JOSHUA GLUCKSMAN
Staff Writer

Courtesy of Kayla Schwartz

Cast members perform Cole Merell's play.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Cole Merrell '21 wrote a play about three siblings navigating vastly different life circumstances who are brought together by a death in the family and — if that wasn't enough — a long drive trying to escape a serial killer. Merrell was raised in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS) and took time off during his Middlebury career to serve as a missionary before coming back to finish his theater degree. The play was informed by his deep knowledge of scripture, the LDS community and the big questions of meaning and purpose central to any person's life, especially those questioning their faith. During Merrell's time at Middlebury, the play was only ever read as a script on Zoom and was never produced as a live show. That is, until seniors Zack Maluccio '23 and Maggie Connolly '23 got their hands on it.

For most of the play, the set consisted of a few chairs filled by the three siblings arranged in an abstract car shape. Lights and sound effects were used cleverly to simulate turn signals, volume controls and keys turning on the ignition. The siblings referenced the Bible with encyclopedic accuracy and cracked cultural inside jokes about the LDS community, for example, referencing how a missionary's companion has to stay by their side even when going to the bathroom. The cast consisted of just three students and a local actor from Ripton who played multiple roles, including the serial killer, the children's dad and random waiters or pedestrians.

For Connolly, the dramas and questions being asked in the play are not just confined to the LDS community but are actually very universal. Her character, Hem, remarks on how she went to college and lost her faith in the LDS Church. Outside the context of the play, Connolly noted how questioning beliefs and worldviews is an experience faced by many college students, and how for her, the play helped her complicate the stereotype of religion.

"Having been raised Catholic, I've grown much more comfortable with criticizing the Catholic Church since I've been in college. I've come to appreciate ways in which my upbringing has made me who I am and added to my life. So, in a way, pointing out the Church's failures has also given me clarity about the positives I can take away from it as well," Connolly said.

One theological argument that permeated the play's plot was a disagreement about the justice of "sins of the father," a biblical concept where one can be punished for the wrongdoings of past generations. Ollie (Ryan Ulen '26) described having a beautiful and complex relationship with this tension, and he notes how much he internalized this concept through this acting experience.

"We all suffer from the choices of our ancestors. I think this is most evident with racism; America is suffering from a seemingly-inexhaustible cycle of racial prejudice. As the ending of the play suggests, one must be mindful of and humbled by one's history to cease any wrongdoing that is passed along generation-to-generation," Ulen said.

The play also incorporated important identities that are difficult to successfully address on stage. Ulen reflected on the ongoing conversation about on-stage representation, given his role as a young autistic boy.

"We all did heavy amounts of research. The most rewarding part of doing this play was unlearning all the stereotypes I associated with autism. I'm humbled and glad to have enlightened myself on the historical and contemporary effects of ableism," Ulen said.

Overall, the play refused to provide clear-cut narratives about how to interpret religion and morality. As a matter of fact, simplifications of good and evil were not provided by the play, and were instead replaced by blurred lines and intricate truths. One such moment came when Hem, right after denouncing the Church for all the pain it has caused her, continues to receive mystical visions, thus muddling her own stance on religion and faith.

"The visions are a source of confusion for Hem throughout the play, but I think she's okay with that. The bigger point of conflict that the visions present Hem with is the confrontation with her father. I think it is precisely humans' inability to know everything that makes religion and spirituality so compelling, and I think Hem is humble enough to recognize that," Connolly said.

MIDDLEBURY'S FRISBEE B-TEAM MAKES HISTORY AND ADVANCES TO DIVISION I REGIONALS

By JACK McGUIRE
Senior Sports Editor

The Middlebury men's ultimate frisbee teams competed in their sectionals tournaments this past weekend. The top team, who call themselves "the Pranksters," went 2–2 at the North New England Division III Sectionals, giving them a bid to New England Division III Regionals. However, more notably, the B-Team, also known as "the Branksters," finished in second place at the Greater New England Developmental Conference tournament, giving them an unexpected bid to New England Division I Regionals.

In this surprising twist, Middlebury's B-Team will now be competing at a more difficult tournament than the school's A-Team. The Branksters are now the first Middlebury frisbee team to ever compete at Division I regionals. The success of the both teams is a testament to the strong frisbee program that the school has developed.

Originally, the Branksters planned to compete at the same tournament that the A-Team competed at this weekend, giving them the opportunity to get a bid to DIII Regionals. However, USA Ultimate, the governing body for frisbee, forced the Branksters to compete at the New England Developmental Conference Tournament against DI school's B-Teams, competition that the Branksters perceived as tougher.

Courtesy of Nate Belman

The ultimate frisbee B-Team poses at their tournament this past weekend at UMass Amherstoffensive players this season.

"We had to go to Amherst to go play at this tournament and it was against all DI opponents, which we assumed was going to be really hard and that we were going to get kind of destroyed by the top teams there," said Nate Belman '25.5, a member of the Branksters.

However, despite the harder competition, the Branksters had a potential chance to qualify for DI Regionals if they placed in the top two teams at the tournament. The Branksters did exactly that, going 4–2 at the tournament which was good enough to give them second place in the tournament and a bid to DI Regionals.

The Branksters beat the University of Massachusetts Amherst B-Team 9–8, the University of Vermont B-Team 12–10 and the Brown University B-Team 10–3. All three schools are part of strong DI programs that are nationally ranked highly.

The team's performance against Brown's B-Team was especially impressive. On a cold, rainy Sunday, the Branksters needed to beat Brown to advance to DI Regionals. Middlebury played a zone defense against Brown, forcing them to make extra throws. In the wet conditions, Brown could not complete these extra throws, allowing the Branksters to dominate.

During the tournament, the team saw impressive performances from Max Chalfin-Jacobs '25, Sam Millay '26.5 and Thomas Walsh '24.5 to push them past their tough opponents.

The Branksters will compete at Division-I New England Regionals in Portland, Maine on May 6–7. There, the team will face tough opponents as they try to qualify for DI nationals, but they are confident that it will be a good experience regardless.

"There's gonna be 16 teams there, and I think we could win a couple of the games," said Belman. "But there are also five teams that are top 20 in the country, and we would get absolutely obliterated by them."

PFL Weekly

By BLAISE SIEFER, ELI DIBARI, MARCO FENGLER, CAPTAIN RUDOLPH
Podcast Hosts

Baseball captain, Alex Price '23, just broke the Middlebury career strikeout record (178) during last weekend's series against Williams. This week, PFL interviews Price about his introduction to America's favorite pastime, the intricacies of being a pitcher and his preparation ahead of the postseason. Price is a force to be reckoned with on the mound, as Marco discovers on Stat of the Week. What do you think is his favorite pitch to throw on a 3–2 count? Check out this week's episode to find out!

Middland Games: A celebration of athleticism, Scottish culture and community

By TING CUI
Contributing Writer

Last Saturday, Middlebury College hosted its first official Highland Games, also known to students as the Middland Games. Over 40 students competed, demonstrating their athletic prowess while audience members cheered.

It was a celebration of culture, and the Middlebury community enjoyed live music and Scottish food while watching students showcase their athletic abilities across multiple events (the caber toss, weight over bar, the stone throw and stone-to-shoulder).

"I'm not sure I ever thought I would witness something like this on campus here, and I love it. I'm so impressed with both the organization that the students have shown and their level of enthusiasm, and also the turnout and participation has been super amazing," said Timothy Cummings, the bagpipe player at the event.

"I've been to Scotland many times, I'm from New Zealand, I've been to many Scottish Highland games, so it's terrific it's become local here," spectator Eric McFerran said. "And I'm impressed with the organization and all the participants, the atmosphere, the music —-- so well done!"

The event was a culmination of the collective efforts of various individuals in the community. The Games team of seven student leaders organized the event Noel Anderson '23, Sam Pelletier '23, Mary Whisnant '23, Cole Helgaas '23, Ran Brown '24, Calvin Dupree '23 and Willie Thacker '23. David Wilder, director of programming and events at the Students Activities Office helped secure a Scottish food truck for the event. Lauren Sayula '23 captured hundreds of photos, and the makerspace staff in the Freeman International Center helped create the laser engraved wood medals for winners.

"We started from scratch, choosing the events and how to score them, creating a design for a t-shirt order and prizes, advertising and general setup for the event," said Sam Pelletier '23, an organizer for the event. " It was a lot of work to go from picking up rocks with friends to hosting a festival with four athletic events, live music and food. It takes a great deal of organization and coordination to bring together such a multifaceted event, and the work we put in showed through in how well the event ran."

The Middland Games consisted of four events that tested the strength and technical skill of competitors: the stone-to-shoulder, caber toss, Braemar stone throw and weight-over-bar. Participants were in four different weight classes: women under 140, women over 140, men under 190 and men over 190. Each athlete was cumulatively scored across all four events to determine their rankings in the Games.

Megan Paasche ' '24 won the women's under 140; Emma Henry ' '25 won the women's over 140; Quinn Donaldson ' '26.5 won the men's under 190; and Thomas Perry '25 won the men's over 190. Winners received a champion's medal made out of a wooden disc from a caber..

"My favorite part of the games was the amount of people who competed. I thought that it was really great that so many people were involved," Perry said.

"Incredible event - shoutout to the Highland Games team for putting it all together, they killed it," said participant Alexis Ballo '25 said. "It's a lot of fun - my back's hurting a little bit, but I signed a waiver so we're all good."

There was an emphasis on safety and inclusivity for all event participants – participants signed waivers, an ambulance was onsite in case of an emergency and organizers offered different weight options for each event to increase accessibility.

"We wanted all of our competitors to attend practice sessions prior to the competition for safety and competence," Pelletier said. "We coached them through the unconventional movements on at least four separate occasions leading up to the Games."

The different weight levels also increased accessibility at the games.

"Obviously they are [people] a lot stronger than me, but I still like how I got to pick up the rocks and throw stuff and have fun," said participant Julia Levin said. "I was not really competing to win, I was competing to have fun and I felt like that was really supported. It was also super cool to see the Scottish community that came out."

In terms of next year's Middland Games, the future is unpredictable.

"It would take a particular collection of people to keep it going, since most of us are leaving," Pelletier said. "But the positive, energetic community that gathered around the first Middland Games leaves some hope that there may be a second. I would love to see the Middland Games continue, or even become a club at Middlebury. If it did return, it would be incredible to get more of the Middlebury and broader Vermont community involved."

Still, the uncertainty around the game's future should not undermine their success this year.

"I've been to Scotland many times, I'm from New Zealand, I've been to many Scottish Highland games, so it's terrific it's become local here," spectator and community member Eric McFerran said. "And I'm impressed with the organization and all the participants, the atmosphere, the music - so well done!"

Courtesy of Lauren Sayula

Thomas Perry '25 competes in the caber toss at the 2023 Middland games.

TRACK DOMINATES AT ONLY HOME MEET OF THE SPRING SEASON

By RYAN HEINZERLING
Sports Editor

The track team routed the competition on Saturday at the Middlebury Outdoor Invitational. It was not particularly close, with the women's team scoring 418 points compared to second place Plattsburgh State (108.5 pts) and third place Union (85.5 pts). The men's team also came in first place of the seven team's competing, scoring 398 points.

While the competition may not have been stiff, the meet carried plenty of benefits for a team that's on the road a lot in the spring.

"Competing at home is just so much fun. Our home meet is a pretty low stakes event," Captain Eva Kaiden '23 said. "I honestly think it's important to have days where we remember how fun it is to do the sport without getting so in our heads about timing and qualifying for future meets and edging out the competition."

> Other standout performances included Emily Rubio '26 winning the 100 hurdles in15.03 seconds.

That showed with impressive performances from almost every event. Kaiden and her crew of relay stars Melissa White '26, Michelle Louie '24 and Cady Barns '23 finished in first in their signature event with a time of 47.76, three full seconds faster than second place. The same group gave Kaiden her proudest moment of the season when they broke the school record in San Diego over March break.

Other standout performances included Emily Rubio '26 winning the 100 hurdles in 15.03 seconds, Kate Kenny '23 putting down a 18:05.50 winning time in the 5k and the Panthers claiming the top four spots in both the 200m and 800m.

The men's team was equally impressive. In the 4x100 relay, the team of Marco Motroni '24, Richard Clark '26, Xander Swann '25 and Aaron Tobias '24 came in first place with a time of 42.85. Peter Hansen '23 also came in first place in the 400 meter hurdles with a time of 54.92.

Saturday also proved to be bittersweet as the team celebrated the class of 2023 for Senior Day.

"It's a tradition for the underclassmen to post all the seniors' roster pho-tos from freshman year and senior year up outside the locker room," Kaiden said. "Walking down there and realizing that my face would be up there this year felt a little surreal, and seeing all the people I came here with, some looking more different from freshman year than others, was definitely something."

With a relaxing, yet dominant, performance on Saturday, men's and women's track look forward to next Saturday for the NESCAC Championships at Connecticut

Courtesy of Middlebury Athletic Communications

Seniors on the women's track team pose before the Middlebury Outdoor Invitational this past Saturday.